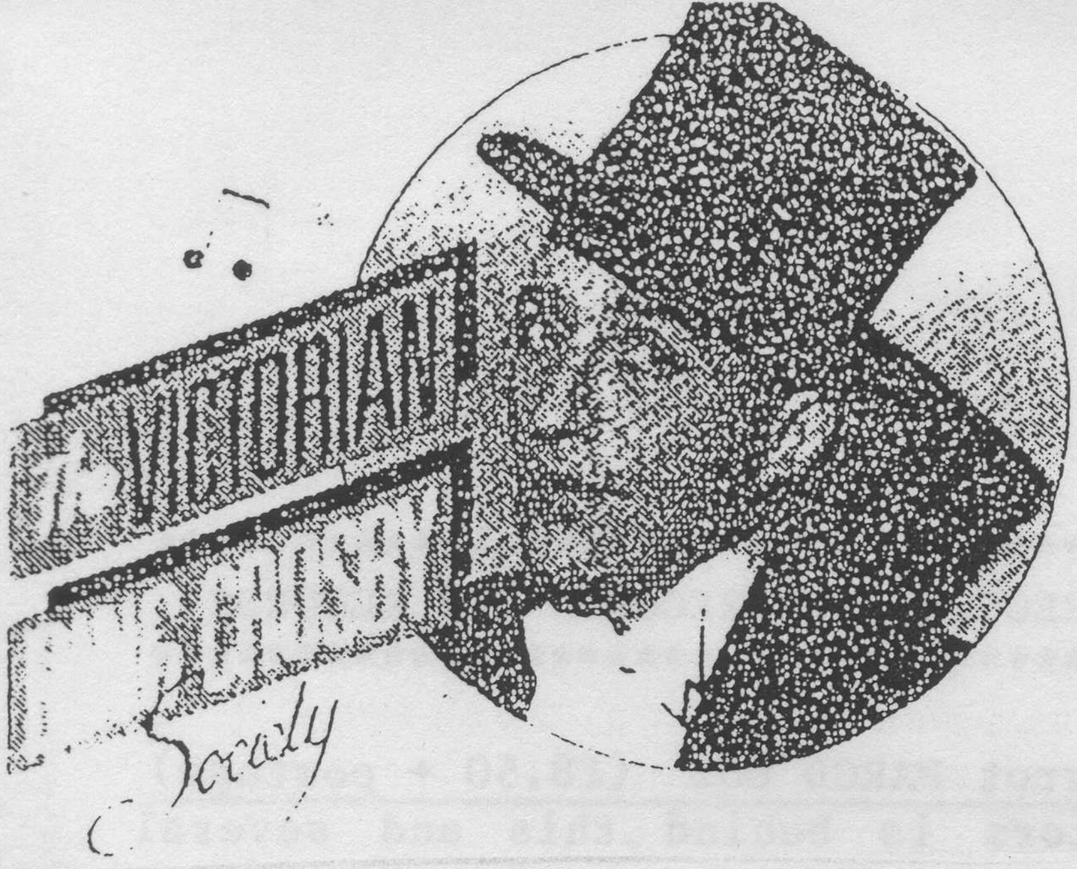

NEWSLETTER - FEBRUARY 1993

Hello again.
Where did Christmas and New Year go? Blink and you could have missed them! Ever since Australia went metric, a year doesn't seem to last like it did in the old days. It feels like we're only getting ten months for our money instead of twelve. Anyway, here it is February already which means that our next meeting is coming up. But before I cover what we will be showing, I want to take this opportunity to thank all those members who have sent me cards and letters. I truly appreciate your thoughts and good wishes. Unfortunately, I simply cannot reply to every one individually, so if you were wondering why you haven't heard back, that is the reason.

Let's start off this newsletter with a repeat of the dates for 1993. Please note that there is one change from the list we gave you last year. Our December meeting will be on a Monday instead of a Tuesday, whereas all other dates are for Tuesdays as originally planned. Well at least you can't say that we didn't give you enough warning!

The dates for 1993 are therefore:
FEBRUARY 23 MAY 11 AUGUST 24 OCTOBER 12 DECEMBER 6

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 23RD - BIRTH OF THE BLUES + THANKS A MILLION

As SBS beat us to the punch and screened THE MAGIC OF BING CROSBY on Christmas eve, we thought it advisable to change our advertised programme for our first meeting.

BIRTH OF THE BLUES was sort of vaguely based on the history of The Original Dixieland Jazz ('Jass' if you happen to be a purist) Band. Only the names and facts have been changed to protect Paramount from a law suit. However, don't let that stop you from enjoying one of Bing's musically superior films.

As a support piece, we're screening one of Dick Powell's lesser seen musicals from the 1930s - THANKS A MILLION. Bing's old boss Paul Whiteman pops up in one of his few screen appearances in this one.

Starting time is 7.30 sharp and please make every attempt to attend because we need the money! The AMP Theatrette costs a fortune and a half to hire these days.

We'll be back with more details before the night, but our May 11 meeting will be our annual get together with the INTERNATIONAL AL JOLSON SOCIETY.

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NEW RECORDS NEW RECORDS NEW RECORDS NEW RECORDS NEW RECORDS NEW RECORDS

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MY HAPPINESS - ELLA FITZGERALD & BING - Parrot PARCD 002 (£8.50 + postage)

An enterprising group of British collectors is behind this and several other CDs drawing on Bing's vast radio legacy. This latest issue provides over 75 minutes of Bing solos, Ella solos and Bing and Ella duets drawn from broadcasts originally aired between 1949 and 1953.

The tracks: Stay with the happy people, I hadn't anyone til you, A dreamer's holiday, My happiness, Basin Street blues, Can anyone explain, Five foot two - eyes of blue, Silver bells, (Medly: Trying, My favourite song, The devil and the deep blue sea), I can dream can't I, Rudolph the red nosed reindeer, Someone to watch over me, White Christmas, Marshmallow world, Moanin' low, That's a plenty, Taking a chance on love, Way back home, (Medley: I hadn't anyone til you, If you ever should leave, I can't give you anything but love), Istanbul, Looking for a boy, Chicago style, Everything I have is yours, Undecided, Memphis Blues.

THE EP COLLECTION

I now have a copy of THE EP COLLECTION mentioned in the last newsletter and can highly recommend it for both sound quality and contents. The tracks: Road to Morocco, It had to be you, That's a plenty, Something in common, Moments to remember, Look to your heart, Suddenly there's a valley, The possibility's there, The loneliness of evening, The longest walk, Sailing down the Chesapeake Bay, The sweetheart waltz, Sing soft sing sweet sing gentle, The moon was yellow, Me and the moon, Pale Moon, Got the moon in my pocket, Chicago style, Young at heart, Oh baby mine, Mademoiselle De Paris, La mer, Morgen, Under Paris Skies, Domenica, White Christmas (1955 version).

Ordered through Derek Parkes Crosby Collectors Club (which means that you pay less than retail), the CD costs the Au$ equivalent of £9.50 + postage. Derek's address: 66 Firs Rd, Firsdown, Salisbury, Wilts SP5 1SW, UK.

A new Australian CD

* In his most recent letter, Derek mentioned an imminent Australian CD release of Bing's Hawaiian recordings. May be worth checking the record stores to see if it has appeared. By the way, if you want to know what Crosby CDs are available in this country, ask the salesperson to show you their book of current releases. You'll be surprised at the size of the list, and although the shop may only have two or three actual discs in stock, they can order anything in the catalogue for you.

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VIDEO NEWS VIDEO NEWS VIDEO NEWS VIDEO NEWS VIDEO NEWS VIDEO NEWS

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* The video THE MAGIC OF BING CROSBY has been re-issued by Reader's Digest in the USA with an additional 30 minutes of footage. Although it's nice to have the extra songs, an entirely new second volume would have been more

welcome. I can't see many people who bought the original shelling out for the same plus a half hour more.

* Browsing through our local video library recently, I was intrigued to see a copy of THE ROAD TO HOLLYWOOD which was a mid-forties compilation of excerpts from Bing's first four Mack Sennett comedies. What makes it worth a look is that the company, Astor Pictures, must have had access to the original negatives, because the picture quality is better than any I've seen to date. However, the movie does have its downside in the form of on-camera comments by the producer and a greater load of fawning, crawling sycophantic load of garbage I've never heard! I sounds like a send-up but it's not. To make matters worse, the guy is totally insincere - he speaks in a flat, expressionless voice and makes no secret of the fact that he's reading all his lines off sheets of paper held by someone to the left of camera. Ah well, the tape rental is only $3 a week.

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BITS'N'PIECES BITS'N'PIECES BITS'N'PIECES BITS'N'PIECES BITS'N'PIECES
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* Bing was very much in evidence on our TV screens in the weeks prior to Christmas, thanks to the Myer commercials which featured his duet with Carol Richards on the song SILVER BELLS. It would be interesting to know how those ads influenced sales of Bing's Christmas CDs but I wouldn't be at all surprised if Myer alone didn't sell thousands of copies, especially as they featured the record over their P.A. system throughout the store. I believe that the Nescafe ad highlighting Edith Piaf's record of NO REGRETS sparked an interest in the famous French singer's discs. It will also be interesting to see whether the Peters Ice Cream campaign using Louis Armstrong's early 30s recording of WHEN YOU'RE SMILING produces similar results for Satch.

* Over the years, we've screened KING OF JAZZ several times and I've never ceased to be impressed by the superb precision work of the Russell Markett dancers. No wonder. I've only recently learned that this dance troop went on to become the original Rocketts at New York's famous Radio City Music Hall when it opened a few years later.

Whilst on the subject of KING OF JAZZ which was produced in 1929/30, I'm convinced that this is one of the forgotten masterpieces of early musical film making. In almost every department - colour, spectacular staging, sound recording, camera work, songs and talent, it stands head and shoulders above any film I have seen from the period. (The only lapse in professionalism shows up in some of the support choreography which is laughably amateurish - Bing in top hat and opera cloak pretending to play the clarinet being a classic example.) Of course the film is 'dated' in that it was made over six decades ago but at the same time, much of it has the kind of style that never dates. And from a Crosby collector's point of view, it gives us a perfect view of the Rhythm Boys at their peak.

* A couple of newsletters ago, I mentioned a double CD set THE JAZZIN' BING CROSBY (Affinity AFS 1021-2) which features 48 tracks recorded between 1927 and 1940. To me, the standout number was 'Rhythm on the River' in that they used the movie soundtrack version. That's one major area that has been ignored by re-issue companies - original film material. Using today's technology to clean up the sound, there must be some great potential issues of 'new' Crosby material. For instance, his duet with Ethel Merman on 'You're the top' from the first version of 'Anything goes'. I know that a lot of film songs have dialogue or sound effects in inappropriate places, but the sound quality, orchestrations and Bing's delivery were often better without the restrictions of a three minute 78. Perhaps film copyright laws are tighter than those applying to records, but if 'Rhythm on the River' got through, then why not others?

* When Bing revived his recording career in a big way in the mid-1970s, it's a shame that no-one thought of pairing him with the Mills Brothers again. They still sounded great together as demonstrated by their appearance in Bing's 50th Anniversary TV special. I've always felt that that would have been a record with great sales potential.

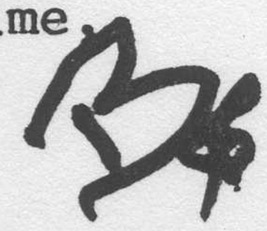
The same applies to Bob Hope. Although it's nice to have an LP re-teaming Bing and Fred Astaire, Hope would have been a far more logical choice. Perhaps he wasn't available or interested.

* Did you notice that the Nova Cinema in Carlton recently screened HIGH SOCIETY? That would be the first Bing film shown on the big screen in many a long year. I guess that they were trying to capitalise on the success of the stage production of the show that was run over Christmas. One other movie that made a brief appearance at the Glasshouse Cinema in the latter part of last year was REACHING FOR THE MOON in which Bing had a memorable cameo spot singing Irving Berlin's 'High Up Low Down'. There were originally several other songs in the film which were cut because musicals were box office poison in 1930. I've never seen it mentioned anywhere, but I wonder if any were any other Crosby solos?

On TV, the ABC recently re-screened the first four 'Road' films plus GOING MY WAY. However, I think we'll have to wait for the much-discussed satellite TV to get Bing's less well-known movies. I believe that in the UK they've even shown CONFESSIONS OF A CO-ED on SKY TV. They don't come much earlier than that!

* MCA in the USA are planning a "Bing Box" set of CDs, tentatively due out in the later part of this year. In a recent letter to BING magazine, Andy McKaie of MCA writes, "If any of your members have intriguing and/or rare memorabilia and photos that they would like to submit for use in the accompanying booklet, please have them contact me." Address your letters: Andy McKaie, Vice President, Catalog Development & Special Products, 70 Universal City Plaza, Universal City, CA 91608, USA.

And that's where we'll leave this newsletter. Until next time.



Paid by chq. 9/2/93

NB - ALL MEMBERS ---COMMITTEE REPORT

The matter of money - or lack of it - is on all minds at the moment --- including those of the Committee who, reluctantly, must now raise it, if the Society is to survive.

We have, for the past year or so, suspended membership fees and used existing funds to cover expenses. Howevera the time of reckoning has arrived and the recommendation now is that is that an annual membership fee be re-introduced - set at $4 per single member - $6 per family.

From a Victorian membership of 75, attendace at film nights averages 30-40, and the funds that would be generated by the absent 50% are sorely missed, especially with the cost of the theatrette so high - while the production and distribution of each newsletter, with stationery, typing, printing, postage etc., costs almost $1.00 per member, for each issue.

It would be appreciated it ;you would register your reaction to the membership fee proposal in the space provided, and either bring it to the October 13th get-together, or post it to Mr. Keith Dorman, 32 Raleigh Street, Blackburn, 3130.

For those who for whatever reason can't attend the film nights, the newsletter (a) keeps you in touch with the Club; and (b) provides a fund of information on Videos, CD's, LP'S, Tapes etc., gleaned from Bob's network of world-wide contacts. However, if you wish;;, you could indicate that you no longer wish to receive the newsletter, in which case the membership fee would be waived.

If no reply is received within a reasonable period, it will be assusmed that this is the course you wish to follow.